
REPRODUCING PATRIARCHY IN DIGITAL ISLAM: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Women's Leadership Narratives on Muslimahnews.net

Achmad Azis Abidin

Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang, Indonesia
E-mail: abiedquotes@walisongo.ac.id

Ahmad Musyafiq

Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang, Indonesia
E-mail: ahmad_musyafiq@walisongo.ac.id

Sri Purwaningsih

Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang, Indonesia
E-mail: sripurwaningsih@walisongo.ac.id

Nikmah Rochmawati

Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang, Indonesia
E-mail: rahma_mewangi@walisongo.ac.id

Corresponding Author: Achmad Azis Abidin

Article history: Received: April 29, 2025 | Revised: November 21, 2025 | Available Online: December 11, 2025.

How to cite this article: Achmad Azis Abidin, Ahmad Musyafiq, Sri Purwaningsih, and Nikmah Rochmawati. "Reproducing Patriarchy in Digital Islam: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Women's Leadership Narratives on Muslimahnews.net". *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 15, no. 2 (2025): 530-555. DOI: 10.15642/teosofi.2025.15.2.530-554.

Abstract: This article examines the reproduction of patriarchal interpretations of women's leadership within contemporary digital Islamic discourse, focusing on Muslimahnews.net. Employing a feminist Critical Discourses Analysis framework developed by Sara Mills and integrating insights from digital religion theory, particularly those of Heidi Campbell and Gary Bunt, the study analyzes how hadith narratives are discursively mobilized to construct and legitimize gender hierarchy. Through content analysis of a leadership-related article, the findings reveal that patriarchal authority is naturalized through selective intertextuality, subject-object positioning, and affective moral framing, which present male leadership as normative and divinely sanctioned while delegitimizing women's public roles. The platform operates as a digital node within a broader cyber-Islamic environment, where networked participation, shifting religious authority, and algorithmic circulation reinforce ideological coherence. This study argues that patriarchal ideology in digital Islam is sustained

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through the interplay of discourse, technological mediation, and affective engagement, offering a critical contribution to scholarship on gender, religion, and digital media.

Keywords: Digital Islam; patriarchy in Islam; women's leadership; feminist critical discourse analysis; digital religion.

Introduction

Debates over women's leadership in Islam continue to occupy a central place in contemporary scholarly discussions, reflecting enduring tensions between scriptural authority, gender equality, and evolving socio-political realities. These debates have gained renewed intensity in the digital age, where social media platforms increasingly serve as influential spaces for religious interpretations and ideological contestation. As Heidi A. Campbell observes, digital media do not merely circulate religious information; they reshape how religious authority, community, and identity are negotiated in contemporary society, particularly among women.¹ Within this environment, digital platforms become significant arenas in which competing interpretations of Islamic text are produced, circulated, and contested, thereby transforming the dynamics of religious discourse and gender politics.

In many Muslim-majority societies, including Indonesia, discussions of women's leadership intersect with broader questions of political legitimacy, cultural change, and the influence of transnational Islamic movements.² Scriptural texts—especially Hadith—occupy a pivotal role within these debates, frequently invoked to justify normative claims regarding gender roles and authority.³ Yet, as

¹ Heidi A. Campbell, "Religious Authority and the Blogosphere," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 15, no. 2 (January 2010): 251–276, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2010.01519.x>.

² Ahmad Muttaqin, "Women's Identity in the Digital Islam Age: Social Media, New Religious Authority, and Gender Bias," *QIJS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 8, no. 2 (December 2020): 253–77, <https://doi.org/10.21043/qjis.v8i2.7095>; Siti Mumayyizah and Slamet Muliono Redjosari, "Contesting Gendered Authority in Islamic Discourse: A Comparative Discourse of Hibah Ra'uf 'Izzat and Siti Musdah Mulia on the Legitimacy of Women's Leadership," *Journal of Islamic Philosophy and Contemporary Thought* 1, no. 1 (June 2023): 70–89, <https://doi.org/10.15642/jipct.2023.1.1.70-89>.

³ Rahmah Eka Saputri et al., "The Role of Women in Marital Dynamics: Hadis Interpretation of Amina Wadud's Hermeneutic," *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 48, no. 2 (December 2024): 282–300, <https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v48i2.1180>.

Nasaruddin Umar argues, scriptural interpretation is inseparable from the historical and socio-political contexts in which it emerges, shaping both the authority to interpret and the boundaries of acceptable meaning.⁴ Consequently, interpretations of Hadith concerning women's leadership often mirror broader ideological struggles between progressive and conservative currents within contemporary Islamic thought.

These tensions are particularly visible in Indonesia through the discourse associated with Hisbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), a transnational Islamist movement advocating the reestablishment of a global caliphate (*khalifah*). Although the Indonesian government officially banned HTI in 2017 for contradicting the state ideology of Pancasila, the movement's ideological networks and narratives have continued to circulate through digital media.⁵ Rather than disappearing from the public sphere, HTI-aligned discourse has adapted to online environments, employing new communication strategies to disseminate conservative theological and gender frameworks. Muslimahnews.net, one of the prominent websites associated with this ideological network, actively promotes narratives that emphasize women's domestic roles and moral guardianship while discouraging female leadership in public and political domains. As Rohmaniyah notes, this transition from formal political mobilization to digital persuasion illustrates the capacity of Islamist movements to maintain ideological influence through mediated communication.⁶

Recent scholarship has increasingly emphasized the digital environment as a new frontier for religious expression and authority. Campbell's work demonstrates that digital media transform not only the circulation of religious knowledge but also the structures through

⁴ Nasaruddin Umar, "Gender Biases in Qur'anic Exegesis: A Study of Scriptural Interpretation from a Gender Perspective," *Hamma* 2, no. 3 (2004): 337–363, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1569208043077314>.

⁵ Paclani Setia and M. Taufiq Rahman, "Kekhalifahan Islam, Globalisasi dan Gerilya Maya: Studi Kasus Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia," *FIKRAH* 9, no. 2 (December 2021): 241, <https://doi.org/10.21043/fikrah.v9i2.11603>.

⁶ Inayah Rohmaniyah, "Perpetuation of Radical Ideology: Depersonalization and Agency of Women After the Banning of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia," *Al-A'raf: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam dan Filsafat* 17, no. 1 (June 2020): 45–66, <https://doi.org/10.22515/ajpif.v17i1.2361>.

which religious authority is constructed and contested.⁷ Similarly, Slama's research in Southeast Asia highlights how Indonesian Muslim women engage with online platforms to negotiate religious meanings and construct new forms of piety and identity.⁸ Despite these growing insights, existing studies have largely focused on digital da'wah and Islamic feminism, while comparatively little attention has been paid to how Hadith, an influential yet interpretively contested textual source, is mobilized within online discourse to legitimize patriarchal gender ideologies. Addressing this gap, the present study examines how Muslimahnews.net employs Hadith narratives to construct discourse that reinforces male authority and constrains women's leadership within the ideological framework of the caliphate.

This study contributes to the literature in two significant ways. First, it investigates how conservative Islamic movements translate classical textual traditions into digital communication strategies, enabling the persistence of ideological narratives even after institutional prohibition. Second, it advances scholarly discussion on gender and power in Islamic discourse by demonstrating how sacred texts are selectively recontextualized within digital media to sustain patriarchal interpretations. As Kecia Ali has argued, critically interrogating such interpretive frameworks is crucial for understanding the epistemological processes through which gender hierarchies are reproduced within Muslims societies.⁹ By focusing on Muslimahnews.net, this research illuminates how digital platforms shape religious subjectivity through selective textual framing, narrative persuasion, and affective discourse.

The study adopts an interdisciplinary framework that combines feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with theories of digital religion. Drawing on Sara Mills's feminist CDA model, the analysis explores how women are discursively positioned as subjects or objects within patriarchal Islamic narratives, paying particular attention to subject-object relations, reader positioning, and

⁷ Heidi A. Campbell and Ruth Tsuria, *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in Digital Media*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2021), 3–5, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429295683>.

⁸ Martin Slama, "Practising Islam through Social Media in Indonesia," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (January 2018): 1–4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2018.1416798>.

⁹ Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence* (London, England: Oneworld, 2006), 10–11.

ideological implication. Mills's approach enables a nuanced understanding of gendered discourse that extends beyond simplistic binary categorizations. By integrating this framework with theoretical insights from Campbell and Gary R. Bunt on digital Islam, the study bridges micro-level linguistic analysis with broader socio-political reflections on religious authority and ideology in digital contexts. This integrated approach remains relatively underdeveloped in Islamic media studies and thus provides a valuable analytical perspective for examining the intersection of gender, religion, and digital communication.

Methodologically, the research analyzes a single article published on Muslimahnews.net in 2022 titled "*Telaah Hadis Kepemimpinan Perempuan*" (An Examination of the Hadith on Women's Leadership). Using Sara's Mills' feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, the study proceeds through five analytical stages: identifying subject-object positioning, examining reader alignment, analyzing diction and narrative structure, uncovering ideological presuppositions, and conducting critical interpretation. This qualitative design prioritizes interpretive analysis rather than doctrinal evaluation, focusing on how digital religious discourse constructs and legitimizes patriarchal interpretations of Islamic teachings. The analysis also situates the text within the broader socio-political context of post-ban HTI discourse, illustrating how digital media continue to reproduce gender hierarchies under the guise of religious authenticity.

Based on this framework, the study seeks to answer three primary research questions: (1) How does Muslimahnews.net employ Hadith narratives to construct patriarchal gender frameworks within caliphate ideology? (2) What discursive strategies are used to legitimize women's subordination in public and political domains? (3) How might such discourse influence readers' perceptions of women's leadership within Islamic thought? By addressing these questions, the study contributes to ongoing debates in Islamic studies, gender studies, and digital media research. It argues that the reproduction of patriarchal ideology in digital Islam operates not only through theological reasoning but also through affective language, discursive repetition, and the strategic recontextualization of sacred texts. Revealing these mechanisms provides a critical lens for understanding how ideological narratives persist in contemporary religious

communication and how feminist critique may challenge their discursive foundations.

Hadith, Power, and Digital Patriarchy: Constructing Gendered Authority in Caliphate-Oriented Discourse

Building upon the broader discussion of digital religious authority and gender discourse outlined in the introduction, this section examines how Hadith narratives are mobilized within online environments to construct and legitimize patriarchal interpretations of Islamic governance. The website Muslimahnews.net, which continues to reflect the ideological orientation associated with Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), employs leadership-related Hadith as discursive instruments to reinforce patriarchal norms within the ideological framework of the caliphate.¹⁰ A notable example is the article “*Telaah Hadis Kepemimpinan Perempuan*” (An Examination of the Hadith on Women's Leadership), published on December 25, 2022, which selectively cites prophetic traditions stating that “a nation ruled by a woman will never prosper.” Within the article, such Hadiths are framed as unequivocal divine injunctions prohibiting female leadership, thereby reinforcing the claim that political authority in Islam is divinely assigned to men.

From the perspective of Sara Mills' feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), patterns of selective citation and interpretive framing demonstrate how linguistic structures are strategically mobilized to naturalize gender hierarchy. In the discourse of Muslimahnews.net, women are frequently represented as passive objects—positioned as those who are led—whereas men are discursively constructed as rational, authoritative, and legitimate subjects of leadership. This subject-object dichotomy not only organizes the narrative at the textual level but also reinforces a broader ideological assertion: that political authority within the Islamic worldview is inherently gendered as masculine.¹¹ Through this discursive configuration, gender hierarchy is reframed not as a contingent social construction but as a divinely sanctioned moral order.

¹⁰ Ainur Rofiq Al Amin, “Kritik Pemikiran Khalifah Hizbut Tahrir yang Autokratik,” *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 7, no. 2 (December 2017): 434–458, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2017.7.2.434-458>.

¹¹ Umi Chaidaroh, “Rigiditas dan Fleksibilitas Diskursus Fiqih Wanita Hizbut Tahrir,” *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 7, no. 2 (December 2017): 459–492, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2017.7.2.459-492>.

Through carefully curated textual positioning, Muslimahnews.net constructs a discursive environment in which men appear as the inheritors of a divine mandate to govern, while women are depicted as emotionally vulnerable, dependent, and naturally oriented toward domestic responsibilities. Hadith narratives are thus mobilized to legitimize patriarchal power structures within Muslim societies, presenting women's participation in political leadership as a deviation from the natural and divinely sanctioned order. Yet, Faiz emphasizes, the interpretation of hadith concerning women's leadership cannot be separated from the political and social conditions in which they emerged.¹² Many prophetic traditions developed within the socio-political context of seventh-century Arabia, where specific historical circumstances shaped their interpretation and application. Consequently, contemporary readings that universalize such texts often reflect modern ideological interests rather than purely theological imperatives. In this sense, the selective interpretation of Hadith within digital discourse reveals how religious texts may be strategically framed to reinforce particular political and gendered agendas.

At the linguistic level, this ideological framing becomes visible through recurring agent-patient structures in the narrative. Expressions such as "*Perempuan diberi kepercayaan*" (women are entrusted) or "*laki-laki diperintahkan*" (men are commanded) consistently privilege masculine agency within the grammatical structure of the discourse. As Sara Mills suggests, such syntactic patterns embed power relations within language itself, reinforcing the ideological perception that men are active, authoritative agents, while women occupy subordinate, dependent positions. When examined semiotically, these linguistic patterns contribute to the systematic erasure of women's agency by positioning them as symbolic representations of submission rather than autonomous actors. The narrative portrays women not as exercising authority but as needing to be guided, protected, or regulated.

This pattern is further reinforced through repetitive lexical expressions such as "*kepemimpinan laki-laki*" (male leadership), "*kodrat*

¹² Muhammad Fauzinuddin Faiz et al., "Women and Political Leadership in Islam: Ma'nā-Cum-Maghzā Critical Hermeneutic Study," *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 17, no. 2 (March 2023): 293–312, <https://doi.org/10.15642/islamica.2023.17.2.293-312>.

perempuan" (female essence), and "*fitrah perempuan*" (women's natural disposition). Such terms function as discursive anchors that stabilize patriarchal interpretations within the religious narrative. As Norman Fairclough's critical role in framework suggests, repetition of key ideological vocabulary plays a crucial role in normalizing particular social hierarchies within public discourse.¹³ Through repeated circulation, these expressions transform culturally contingent interpretations into seemingly self-evident truths. Within this discursive logic, male leadership appears as an unquestionable religious principle, while women's exclusion from political authority is framed as a natural and morally necessary condition.

Beyond linguistic structures, the persuasive power of Muslimahnews.net also relies heavily on readers' affective engagement. Emotionally charged vocabulary, such as "*fitrah*" (natural disposition), "*ketaatan*" (obedience), and "*kemuliaan*" (dignity), plays a significant role in transforming ideological claims into emotionally compelling moral narratives. Sara Ahmed's concept of affective economies helps commitments and collective identities.¹⁴ In the context of Muslimahnews.net, emotions such as fear of divine punishment, pride in modesty, and reverence for male authority become a central mechanism through which patriarchal discourse gains moral legitimacy. Through this affective framing, submission is not presented as subordination but as a spiritually fulfilling form of religious devotion.

This affective strategy also aligns with Brigit Meyer's concept of "sensational forms", in which religious meaning is communicated through mediated experiences that engage both emotion and perception.¹⁵ In this sense, Muslimahnews.net functions simultaneously as a platform of theological instruction and as a digital environment in which religious feelings are cultivated through repetition, narrative intensity, and symbolic imagery. The fusion of emotional resonance and ideological messaging produces a persuasive religious atmosphere in which gender hierarchy appears not only rational but morally and spiritually meaningful.

¹³ Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (New York: Longman Publishing, 1995), 56.

¹⁴ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (London: Routledge, 2013), 45–49.

¹⁵ B. Meyer, *Sensational Movies: Video, Vision, and Christianity in Ghana* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 7–8.

Within the broader theoretical framework of digital religion, these discursive practices reflect several dynamics identified by Heidi Campbell as characteristic of contemporary online religiosity. First, Muslimahnews.net cultivates a networked religious community in which readers participate through digital interactions such as sharing, reposting, and commenting, transforming routine online engagement into expressions of religious belonging. Second, the platform contributes to the formation of a storied identity, repeatedly circulating narratives that portray ideal Muslim womanhood as modest, obedient, and domestically oriented. Third, the discourse illustrates shifting authority, as interpretive power increasingly moves from traditional religious institutions toward digitally mediated ideological actors. Fourth, the platform demonstrates convergent practice by blending classical scriptural references with contemporary digital communication practices. Finally, Muslimahnews.net engages in what Campbell describes as bricolage, selectively combining Hadith narratives, classical scholarship, and modern political rhetoric to construct a seemingly coherent and authoritative vision of gender roles in Islam.¹⁶

The ideological influence of such discourse is further amplified by algorithmic mediation within the social media ecosystem. On platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram, posts emphasizing obedience or condemning female leadership often generate strong emotional reactions—both approval from supporters and criticism from opponents. Algorithms interpret these interactions as relevant and popular, thereby increasing the content's visibility. Taina Bucher describes this process as *algorithmic visibility*, in which engagement metrics determine which messages become widely circulated within digital networks.¹⁷ Through this mechanism, emotional intensity becomes closely intertwined with epistemic authority, as repeated exposure encourages the audience to perceive particular narratives as credible and widely accepted.

As a result, patriarchal discourse in digital environments is sustained not solely by theological arguments but also by the technological logic of virality. The more frequently such messages appear within users' digital feeds, the more they acquire an aura of

¹⁶ Campbell and Tsuria, *Digital Religion*, 19–23.

¹⁷ T. Bucher, *If...Then: Algorithmic, Power, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 43–47.

legitimacy. In this sense, repetition itself becomes a mechanism of ideological reinforcement. Digital patriarchy thus emerges as a hybrid phenomenon shaped by the interaction of religious narratives, emotional engagement, and algorithmic amplification.¹⁸

Gary Bunt's concept of cyber-Islamic environments provides further insight into how Muslimahnews.net operates within the broader transnational digital ecosystem. The platform functions as digital gatekeeping, determining which interpretations of Islamic texts are legitimized and which are excluded. At the same time, it participates in ongoing authority competition by positioning its interpretations as more authentic than those offered by state-affiliated scholars or the Islamic feminist perspective. Through its online circulation, Muslimahnews.net also contributes to transnational ideological flows, disseminating HTI-aligned gender narratives across linguistic and geographic boundaries. This strategy of affective mobilization, combining emotional language, religious symbolism, and political messaging, encourages readers to view patriarchal governance not merely as a social arrangement but as a religious obligation.¹⁹

To illustrate how this discourse operates at the textual level, Table 1 summarizes the pattern of subject-object positioning identified in the Muslimahnews.net article according to Sara Mills' CDA framework.

Table 1. Subject-Object Positioning in Muslimahnews.net

Analytical Dimension	Linguistic Representation	Discursive Function	Ideological Implication
Subject (Men)	Men are portrayed as divinely mandated leaders	Represented as rational, decisive, and authoritative	Constructs men as natural holders of political authority
Object (Women)	Women are depicted as emotionally weak and domestically	Represented as passive and dependent	Reinforces the belief that women's leadership

¹⁸ Gary R. Bunt, *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018); Nur Maulidya Wardatur Rohmah, Mukhammad Zamzami, and Ida Rochmawati, "Constructing Digital Patriarchy: Framing the Hadith of *Dayyuth* and Gendered Morality in Online Islamic Discourse," *Journal of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought* 3, no. 1 (June 2025): 1–36, <https://doi.org/10.15642/juit.2025.3.1.1-36>.

¹⁹ Bunt, *Hashtag Islam*, 137–144.

	oriented		contradicts divine order
Reader Position	Readers aligned with the moral legitimacy of male authority	Encourages acceptance of gender hierarchy	Invoker's religious obedience to sustain patriarchal norms
Narrative Voice	Hadith invoked as ultimate prophetic validation	Creates an impression of divine inevitability	Establishes patriarchy as sacred and unquestionable

The repeated invocation of the Hadith “*lan yufliha qawm wallaw amrubum imra’ab*” (“a nation that entrusts its affairs to a woman will never prosper”) demonstrates how religious texts are mobilized to authorize male supremacy. Contemporary scholars such as Saludeen and Dukawa argue that such Hadiths should be understood in their specific historical context, linked to seventh-century Arabian political circumstances, and should not be universally applied without contextual interpretation.²⁰ Nevertheless, Muslimahnews.net recontextualizes these traditions as timeless doctrinal truths, effectively removing them from their historical setting.

Within the framework of Michael Foucault’s concept of power/knowledge, this recontextualization can be understood as a discursive strategy that fuses religious authority with ideological governance.²¹ Through this process, religious interpretation becomes a mechanism for regulating not only social behavior but also the collective imagination regarding gender roles. The result is what Piela describes as *digital orthodoxy*, a form of online religiosity in which repeated digital circulation replaces critical theological engagement.²²

Such discursive dynamics also resonate with Antonio Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony. Rather than imposing domination through coercion, patriarchal ideology is reproduced through processes of normalization and consent. By continuously circulating narratives that portray women’s leadership as incompatible with

²⁰ Abdulkadir Salaudeen and Saidu Ahmad Dukawa, “A Critique of Abu Bakrah’s Hadith on Women Political Leadership,” *Abqari Journal* 24, no. 1 (April 2021): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.33102/abqari.vol24no1.264>.

²¹ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 109–110.

²² Anna Piela, *Wearing the Niqab: Muslim Women in the UK and US* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 137–139, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350166066>.

divine law, Muslimahnews.net cultivates an affective consensus among readers who internalize patriarchal values as religious truth.²³ Through repeated digital exposure-shared articles, reposted hashtags, and supportive commentaries-these ideas gradually become embedded within everyday moral reasoning. This process aligns with Gary Bunt's notion of a cyber-caliphate ecology, in which online religious narratives function as a mechanism of ideological continuity even in the absence of formal political structures.²⁴

Islamic feminist scholarship offers an alternative epistemological framework that challenges these patriarchal interpretations. Scholars such as Fatima Mernissi and Amina Wadud argue that leadership in Islam should be grounded in principles of justice, competence, and ethical responsibility rather than gender hierarchy.²⁵ More recent studies, including the work of Nurchasanah, demonstrate how Muslim women utilize digital platforms to reinterpret religious texts and challenge exclusionary discourses.²⁶ These feminist perspectives emphasize contextual readings of Hadith and highlight historical examples of women's leadership within Islamic civilization, from Aisha's political influence during the battle of Jamal to scholarly figures such as Fatimah al-Fihri. Such historical evidence suggests that the rigid dichotomy between male authority and female obedience promoted by Muslimahnews.net represents not an inherent feature of Islamic tradition but a contemporary ideological reinterpretation of sacred discourse.

From a critical perspective, that reliance on Hadith narratives to restrict women's leadership illustrates how religious discourse can function as a mechanism for constructing and sustaining social hierarchies. Through the repeated invocation of prophetic sayings, the discourse operated as a religious virtue. As Sara Mills' CDA

²³ Nayandeep Sardar, "Understanding Hegemony: A Critical Analysis through the Lens of Antonio Gramsci," *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research* 6, no. 2 (March 2024): 15796, <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i02.15796>.

²⁴ Bunt, *Hashtag Islam*, 11–14.

²⁵ Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 133–135; Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 75–77.

²⁶ Nurchasanah and Abdul Basit, "Muslim Women in the Digital Age: Between Representation and Reality in the Islamic Digital Media Landscape," *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research* 08, no. 06 (June 2025), <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v8-i6-50>.

framework demonstrates, this process unfolds through reader positioning, guiding audiences to identify with narratives of pious submission rather than critical reflection. By linking patriarchal governance to the ideal caliphate, Muslimahnews.net connects gender hierarchy with broader eschatological aspirations, presenting male dominance as both a political necessity and a path toward religious salvation. In this way, the platform reconfigures digital media as an extension of theological governance—a domain in which religious authority, ideological power, and technological infrastructures intersect to sustain and reproduce patriarchal interpretations of Islam.

Rhetoric, Affect, and Digital Piety: Normalizing Women's Subordination in Online Islamic Discourse

The discourses presented on Muslimahnews.net systematically construct women's subordination as a natural and divinely ordained condition through a set of carefully orchestrated rhetorical and linguistic strategies. Each article typically follows a structured narrative sequence that begins with the citation of Hadith, proceeds with authoritative commentary, and concludes with moral exhortation. This narrative arrangement reflects what van Dijk describes as the macro-discourse of persuasion, in which textual organization itself operates ideologically to guide readers toward a predetermined conclusion.²⁷ By placing Hadith citations at the opening of the article, the discourse immediately establishes divine authority, ensuring that subsequent interpretations appear not as human reasoning but as expressions of sacred truth. This linear structure reinforces the perception that the patriarchal interpretation of Islam is both inevitable and unquestionable, positioning the reader to receive the message as spiritual instruction rather than sociopolitical argument.

A prominent rhetorical feature of Muslimahnews.net is the strategic use of collective pronouns and inclusive expressions, such as “*kita*” (We), “*umat Islam*” (the Muslim community), and “*saudara-saudari seiman*” (brothers and sisters in faith). These linguistic choices generate what Wodak identifies as discursive collectivization, a process through which ideological alignment is reframed as moral

²⁷ Teun A. Van Dijk, “Structures of Discourse and Structures of Power,” *Annals of the International Communication Association* 12, no. 1 (January 1989): 18–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.1989.11678711>.

solidarity.²⁸ Through this strategy, readers are invited to identify themselves as members of an unfield faith community that shares common values and beliefs. As a result, ideological conformity becomes conflated with religious commitment. Readers are positioned not as external observers evaluating the discourse critically but as participants within a shared moral universe. Within this framework, disagreement with the patriarchal interpretation presented in the text can easily be interpreted as a betrayal of communal religious unity. Language thus functions as a subtle disciplinary mechanism, cultivating emotional allegiance to the ideology by linking obedience to faith and dissent to impiety.

Equally significant is the affective dimensions embedded within the discourse. Expressions such as “*fiṭrah perempuan*” (women’s natural disposition), “*ketaatan kepada syariat*” (obedience to divine law), and “*kemuliaan perempuan*” (women’s dignity) operate as what Ahmed terms affective anchors, emotionally binding submission to spiritual fulfillment.²⁹ Through continuous repetition, these phrases transform social hierarchy into a moral virtue. Submissions are sanctified as expressions of religious devotion, while autonomy is implicitly framed as a form of moral deviation. Such affective language ensures that patriarchal ideology is not merely accepted at the level of cognition but internalized emotionally by readers. Consequently, gender inequality is reinterpreted as an act of piety rather than as a social arrangement. This emotional framing produces what might be described as a form of affective closure, in which readers come to perceive subordination as the highest expression of religious obedience.

The authority of Muslimahnews.net’s discourse is further reinforced through selective intertextuality, namely the strategic citation of Qur’anic verses, Hadith traditions, and classical Islamic commentaries that align exclusively with patriarchal interpretations. This selective referencing creates the appearance of comprehensive scholarship while systematically excluding feminist and egalitarian perspectives. According to Mills, such discursive omission functions as a form of ideological erasure, silencing alternative interpretations

²⁸ Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*, 3rd ed (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2016), 119–120.

²⁹ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 13–15.

by rendering them invisible.³⁰ The absence of prominent scholars such as Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas, or Fatima Mernissi from the platform’s theological discussions represents an ideological act in itself, constructing the illusion of interpretive consensus where significant intellectual diversity actually exists. By presenting only one interpretive framework, Muslimahnews.net effectively transforms patriarchal interpretation into the dominant epistemology within its digital religious discourse.

To illustrate how these discursive strategies collectively function to normalize women’s subordination, Table 2 below maps the linguistic and rhetorical patterns observed in Muslimahnews.net to their broader ideological effects.

Table 2. Discourse Strategies Used by Muslimahnews.net to Legitimize Women’s Subordination

Strategy Type	Linguistic Device	Discursive Function	Ideological Effect
Structural Sequencing	Citation-Commentary-Moral Closure	Creates narrative flow from divine truth to moral obligation	Naturalized patriarchy as religious inevitability
Collectivization	Inclusive pronouns such as “we,” “our,” and “faith.”	Aligns readers with a shared moral identity	Discourages dissent; equates obedience with unity
Affective Anchoring	Emotional terms such as “fitrah,” “piety,” and “obedience.”	Links submission to moral satisfaction	Transforms inequality into spiritual virtue
Selective Intertextuality	Exclusive citation of patriarchal tafsir	Simulates theological completeness	Silences feminist interpretations
Moral Closure	Exhortations such as “true dignity lies in obedience.”	Provides emotional resolution	Converts ideology into religious command

Within this discursive framework, the representation of women reflects what Mills describes as subject-object inversion.³¹ Women are depicted as moral subjects only insofar as they embody obedience and submission, yet they are simultaneously deprived of narrative agency.

³⁰ Sara Mills, *Feminist Stylistics* (London: Routledge, 1995), 12–13.

³¹ Sara Mills, *Discourse: The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 1997), 76–79.

Phrases such as “*penjaga rumah tangga*” (guardians of the household) and “*pendukung perjuangan suami*” (supporters of their husbands) present women's virtue as dependent upon male authority. These linguistic constructions transform passivity into piety and silence into sanctity. By praising women for embracing domestic roles, the discourse performs what Fairclough identifies as ideological normalization—the transformation of structural inequality into socially admired virtue.³² Muslimahnews.net, therefore, does not merely describe gender relations; it actively constructs a moral order in which male authority is privileged and female compliance is framed as a sacred duty.

The conclusions of most articles on the platform reinforce this ideological framework through a moral-closure perspective. Statements such as “*ketaatan kepada syariat adalah kemuliaan perempuan*” (obedience to divine law is a woman's honor) function as what van Leeuwen describes as moral legitimation, a process through which ideology is validated through ethical language.³³ These concluding affirmations reassure readers that adherence to patriarchal norms ensures divine reward, while deviation from those norms implies moral failure. Psychologically, this rhetorical closure eliminates interpretive ambiguity and produces a sense of moral completion. Readers leave the text not with questions but with confirmation. Through this technique, ideology is not debated but internalized, naturalized through the interplay of moral certainty and emotional resonance. The farming of patriarchal values as universal moral truths strengthens the authority of religious discourse in shaping gendered moral consciousness.

The persuasive power of Muslimahnews.net extends beyond textual discourse into the dynamics of digital engagement. Online interactions such as likes, comments, and shares serve as collective affirmations, creating a ritualized form of participation that amplifies ideological messages. Campbell describes this phenomenon as networked piety, where expressions of agreement in digital spaces become religious practices in themselves.³⁴ The algorithmic visibility

³² Norman Fairclough, “Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Policy Studies,” *Critical Policy Studies* 7, no. 2 (July 2013): 177–197, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2013.798239>.

³³ Theo van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 106–108.

³⁴ Campbell and Tsuria, *Digital Religion*, 72–78.

generated through these interactions reinforces the perception of communal consensus, making patriarchal discourse appear as the dominant voice of Islam within the online sphere. In this context, faith and digital visibility become intertwined, and ideology is transformed into a form of social performance. Readers demonstrate their piety by publicly affirming the narratives that simultaneously constrain their agency. Digital participation thus becomes a mechanism of ideological consent, enabling patriarchal ideology to persist not through coercion but through collective affirmation.

Taken together, the rhetorical strategies deployed by Muslimahnews.net form a multilayered system of persuasion that integrates religious authority, emotional attachment, and digital interactivity. Each linguistic and structural device—whether citation, collectivization, affective anchoring, or moral closure—operates as part of a broader apparatus of ideological production. In doing so, the discourse generates what Gramsci describes as consensual hegemony, a condition in which inequality is internalized and accepted as moral truth. Through this process, Muslimahnews.net not only sustains patriarchal ideology within the digital public sphere but also transforms it into a form of moral common sense. By combining textual authority with emotional resonance and participatory digital rituals, the platform converts gender subordination into both spiritual conviction and command identity. The following section examines how this ideological framework shapes readers' perceptions and contributes to the reproduction of gender hierarchy within digital religious communities.

Digital Patriarchy and the Regime of Truth in Networked Islamic Discourse

The discourse produced by Muslimahnews.net represents a sophisticated mechanism for reproducing patriarchal ideology within contemporary digital Islamic spaces. Its influence lies not solely in the textual content itself but in the convergence of language, religious authority, and digital participation that together construct a persuasive moral framework. Drawing on Fairclough's notion of common-sense ideology, the website gradually normalizes gender inequality as a

divinely sanctioned truth that no longer appears ideological.³⁵ Through the repeated invocation of the sanctioned truth that prohibits female leadership, the discourse constructs a worldview in which obedience becomes synonymous with faith, while leadership is associated with moral deviation for women. Over time, such repetition transforms patriarchal interpretation into a form of spiritual habit, where belief and behavior become inseparable. Reading thus becomes an act of tacit submission, enabling the ideology to circulate seamlessly across the audience and digital environments.

This discourse process can also be interpreted through Foucault's concept of the regime of truth, whereby power operates by defining what counts as legitimate knowledge.³⁶ Muslimahnews.net positions itself as an epistemic authority capable of determining how Islamic knowledge should be interpreted and disseminated. By monopolizing interpretive legitimacy, the platform constructs a narrow moral framework that equates masculinity with authority and femininity with piety. Within this regime, women's interpretive agency is not explicitly denied but rather discursively dissolved. The discourse implicitly assumes that authoritative religious interpretation belongs to male voices. Sara Mills' model of Critical Discourse Analysis makes this mechanism visible: men appear as the textual subjects who produce and control discourse, while women are positioned as silent objects within it. This asymmetry transforms patriarchal hierarchy into an epistemological certainty that appears natural and unquestionable.

³⁵ Norman Fairclough, "Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Policy Studies," *Critical Policy Studies* 7, no. 2 (July 2013): 177–197, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2013.798239>.

³⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 93–94.

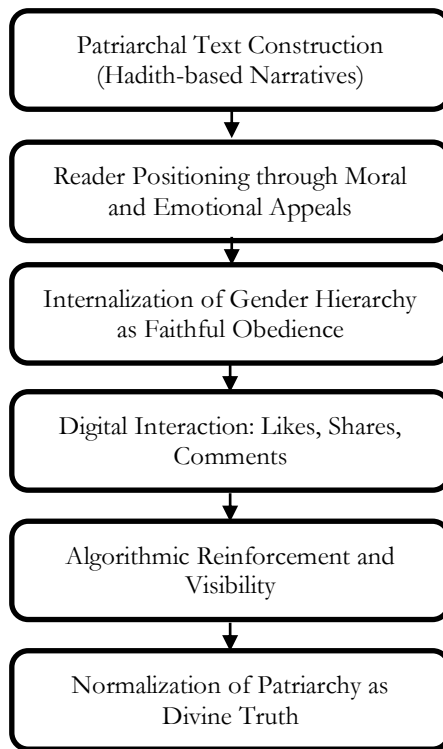


Figure 1. Cycle of Ideological Reproduction in Muslimahnews.net's Digital Discourse

The ideological cycle illustrated in Figure 1 demonstrates how discourse moves from textual production to individual consciousness and ultimately to broader social reproduction through digital mediation. The persuasive structure of Muslimahnews.net ensures that each stage-textual authority, emotional engagement, and digital interaction-reinforces the others. Readers are positioned primarily as believers rather than critical interpreters, encouraged to practice piety through online participation. As Campbell explains, this reflects the dynamics of networked religion, a form of mediated faith in which religious belief is enacted through technological platforms.³⁷ Within this framework, every “like,” “comment,” or “share” functions not merely as an expression of agreement but as a micro-ritual that extends the circulation of patriarchal ideology. Through these algorithmic feedback loops, patriarchal narratives acquire the

³⁷ Heidi A. Campbell, *Digital Religion as the Networked Spiritual Infrastructure of Our Religious Futures* (Cham: Springer, 2025), 69–72.

appearance of divine consensus, gradually solidifying as a form of digital orthodoxy within online Islamic discourse.

At the ideological level, this digital orthodoxy exemplifies what Gramsci characterizes as hegemony through consent.³⁸ Rather than imposing gender inequality through overt coercion, Muslimahnews.net secures ideological acceptance through voluntary affirmation. The rhetoric of moral purity and religious obligation encourages readers to internalize gender hierarchy as a sacred duty. Women who embrace domestic roles are praised as “*pejuang Islam sejati*” (true Islamic warriors), while those who aspire to leadership are subtly depicted as “*melanggar fitrah*” (violating divine nature). Through this moral framing, patriarchy becomes a self-sustaining ideological system that requires no external enforcement. It persists through religious conviction itself, operating less as an external doctrine and more as a lived emotional reality embedded within everyday expressions of faith.

This dynamic reflects what Bunt describes as the cyber-caliphate ecology, a digital environment in which religious discourse and political ideology become deeply intertwined.³⁹ Within this ecosystem, patriarchal values circulate globally under the banner of Islamic orthodoxy. Consequently, the discourse of Muslimahnews.net transcends local Indonesian political debates and resonates with broader transnational Islamist narratives that celebrate male authority while portraying gender equality as a Western intrusion. Through digital dissemination, patriarchal ideology becomes culturally adaptive: it appears technologically modern while preserving traditional hierarchies of power. This fusion of theological conservatism and digital innovation enables patriarchal discourse to flourish even within the liberalized communicative landscape of social media.

From the perspective of Islamic feminist scholarship, this ideological system constitutes an important site of contestation. Scholars such as Wadud, Ahmed, and Mernissi emphasize that the ethical foundations of Islam prioritize justice, dignity, and equality

³⁸ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 12–13, 57–58.

³⁹ Gary R. Bunt, *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 232–236; Gary R. Bunt, *Islamic Algorithms: Online Influence in the Muslim Metaverse* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024), 212–218.

rather than subordination.⁴⁰ Yet, as Nisa and Basit observe, digital religious platforms frequently privilege male interpretive authority while marginalizing feminist voices.⁴¹ The digital reproduction of patriarchal discourse, therefore, functions as an epistemic barrier that prevents alternative interpretations from gaining legitimacy. In response to this challenge, feminist scholars advocate approaches such as *tafsir kontekstual* (contextual exegesis), which situate Qur'anic and Hadith interpretations within their historical and social contexts rather than employing them to justify contemporary hierarchies. This interpretive framework reframes Islam as an ethical tradition open to reinterpretation rather than a closed system monopolized by male authority.

A critical reading of the findings through Sara Mills' analytical framework reveals that the ideological strength of Muslimahnews.net lies in its capacity to merge belief, emotion, and technology into a unified, persuasive structure. The five analytical stages, subject-object identification, reader positioning, narrative analysis, ideological deconstruction, and critical interpretation, expose how patriarchal discourse is transformed into emotional truth. The language employed by the platform does not merely describe social roles; it actively shapes the emotional and spiritual experiences that sustain those roles. This represents the defining characteristic of digital patriarchy: its invisibility. By appealing to sentiments of devotion, care, and religious love, the discourse reproduces domination through affective attachment. Only by uncovering these emotional mechanisms can scholars and practitioners effectively challenge the epistemic dominance of patriarchal interpretations within contemporary digital Islam.

Taken together, the frameworks proposed by Campbell and Bunt demonstrate that Muslimahnews.net functions not merely as a platform for reproducing patriarchal discourse but as a comprehensive digital infrastructure in which identity, authority, and ideology are continuously co-constructed. Their combined

⁴⁰ Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman*, 3; Leila Ahmed, *Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence, from the Middle East to America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 11; Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite*, 87.

⁴¹ Eva F. Nisa, *Muslims Enacting Identity: Gender Through Digital Media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 445; Lutfi Basit, *Lensa Gender Di Media Massa: Meta Analisis Politisi Perempuan* (Medan: Umsu Press, 2022), 104.

perspectives reveal that networked community formation, transformations of religious authority, transnational ideological circulation, and affective mobilization operate synergistically to shape how users interpret and internalize Islamic gender norms. Within this configuration, digital engagement is not simply a passive act of consumption but an active process of subject formation through which users incorporate patriarchal narratives into their religious identities. Acts such as liking, commenting, and sharing, therefore, operate as micro-rituals that reinforce communal belonging while simultaneously validating the ideological authority of HTI-aligned interpretations. Through these everyday digital practices, the discourse of Muslimahnews.net acquires the force of moral and emotional inevitability, embedding patriarchal meanings within routine online interaction and extending HTI's transnational ideological project far beyond conventional institutional boundaries.

Concluding Remarks

This study demonstrates that Muslimahnews.net functions as a digital apparatus that strategically embeds patriarchal interpretations of Hadith within the structural dynamics of digital religion. Drawing on Campbell's analytical framework, the findings reveal how the platform mobilizes networked communities to construct a shared moral universe in which digital participation becomes an expression of religious piety. Through recurring narratives that emphasize obedience, modesty, and domestic virtue, the site constructs a storied identity of the "deal Muslim woman," while simultaneously relocating interpretive authority from traditional religious institutions to digitally mediated actors aligned with HTI. The convergence of scriptural citation, moral exhortation, and participatory online practices transforms everyday digital engagement into a series of micro-rituals that subtly normalize gender hierarchy within contemporary Islamic discourse.

Viewed through Bunt's concept of cyber-Islamic environments, Muslimahnews.net can further be understood as a nodal site within a broader transnational ideological ecosystem. The platform operates as a digital gatekeeper that amplifies patriarchal interpretations of Islamic texts while marginalizing alternative perspectives, thereby producing the appearance of theological consensus in online religious discourse. Through selective intertextuality, emotionally charged rhetoric, and

algorithmically amplified circulation, its narratives extend beyond local Indonesian debates and resonate with wider transnational Islamist networks that promote HTI-aligned gender norms. Within this digital landscape, religious authority is increasingly negotiated through visibility, circulation, and affective engagement, illustrating how contemporary Islamic discourse is shaped not only by scholarly authority but also by the dynamics of digital communication.

Taken together, these findings indicate that patriarchal ideology in digital Islam is sustained not merely through textual interpretation but through the complex interaction of discourse, technological mediation, and affective mobilization. By integrating feminist discourse analysis with the theoretical perspective of digital religion and cyber-Islamic studies, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how religious authority, gender ideology, and digital infrastructures collectively shape contemporary Muslim publics. The study also highlights the importance of strengthening digital religious literacy and advancing feminist hermeneutical approaches that challenge epistemic monopolies that marginalize women's interpretive voices. Future research could extend this analytical framework through comparative studies of Islamic digital media across Southeast Asia and other Muslim contexts to further explore how technological environments reshape religious authority, gender discourse, and moral imagination in an increasingly networked Islamic world.

Acknowledgment

The authors gratefully acknowledge the support of the Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan (LPDP), whose funding has been essential to the completion of this research. Sincere appreciation is also extended to the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Humanities at UIN Walisongo Semarang for its academic environment.

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